

REMARKS

The rejection of Claims 1-19 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) over US 6,800,412 (US '412) in view of US 6,846,604 (US '604) and 6,057,076 (US '076) is respectfully traversed.

Applicants note that US '604 is disqualified as prior art under 35 U.S.C. § 103(c) because the present application and US '604 were, at the time the present application was made, owned by Ricoh Co., Ltd.

Applicants note that US '604 belongs to a patent family that has seven numbers, two of which were published on March 26, 2003 (EP 1296194 (EP '194) and CN 1405637 (CN '637)). Since the present application was filed on August 22, 2003, both EP '194 and CN '637 may be available as prior art under 35 U.S.C. § 102(a). However, the present application claims priority to JP 2002-245932 (JP '932), filed August 26, 2002, and JP 2003-014045 (JP '045), filed January 22, 2003. Applicants file concurrently herewith English translations of both JP '932 and JP '045 along with statements by the translator that said translations are true. Accordingly, Applicants request that the Examiner acknowledge Applicants' perfection of priority to JP '932 and JP '045. Since US '604 or any of its patent family members do not qualify as prior art, Applicants believe that the disclosures of US '412 and US '076 do not render Claims 1-19 obvious. Applicants respectfully request that the Examiner acknowledge the same and withdraw this rejection.

The rejection of Claims 19-25 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) over US 6,756,175 (US '175) in view of US '076 is respectfully traversed.

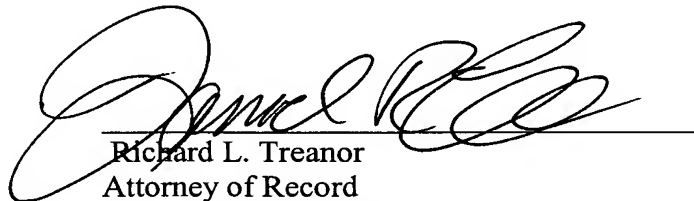
Applicants note that US '175 is disqualified as prior art under 35 U.S.C. § 103(c) because the present application and US '175 were, at the time the present application was made, owned by Ricoh Co., Ltd.

Applicants note that US '175 is based on US 10/188,753, filed on July 5, 2002, which published as US 2003/0027074 (US '074) on February 6, 2003. Therefore, US '074 may qualify as prior art under 35 U.S.C. §102(a). However, since Applicants have perfected priority to both JP '932 and JP '045, whose respective filing dates antedate the publication date of US '074, US '074 is not available as prior art. Since neither US '175 nor US '074 is available as prior art, Applicants respectfully request that the Examiner withdraw this rejection.

In view of the comments contained herewith, it is believed that the present application is now in a condition for allowance. Should the Examiner deem that a personal or telephonic interview would be helpful in advancing this application toward allowance, he is encouraged to contact Applicants' undersigned representative at the below-listed telephone number.

Respectfully submitted,

OBLON, SPIVAK, McCLELLAND,  
MAIER & NEUSTADT, P.C.



Richard L. Treanor  
Attorney of Record  
Registration No. 36,379

Customer Number  
**22850**  
Tel: (703) 413-3000  
Fax: (703) 413 -2220  
(OSMMN 06/04)

Daniel R. Evans, Ph.D.  
Registration No. 55,868